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History

Age 7-11



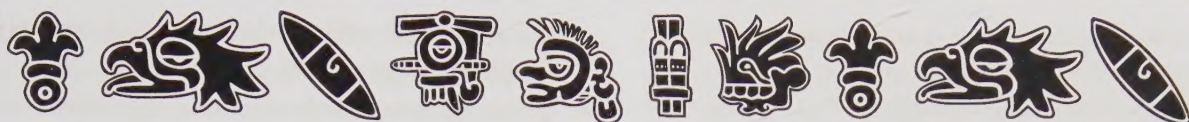
Aztecs



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AZTECS



TEACHER'S ACTIVITY BOOK

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INTRODUCTION

This pack is designed to help you teach history-led cross-curricular themes about the Aztecs and the Spanish Conquest of the Aztec Empire based on the QCA Scheme of Work for history:

What can we find out about the Aztec civilisation from what has survived?

The resources included in the pack provide supporting materials, discussion points and activities to complement the BBC programmes on Mexico and the Aztecs.

The programmes also link to the World Study Unit of the National Curriculum for History on the Aztecs, outlined on page 107 of the *National Curriculum Handbook for primary teachers in England* (1999).

THE TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

Programme 1: In search of the Aztecs

This programme begins in present-day Mexico City, and we follow the presenter as she finds evidence of the Aztec Empire that flourished in this part of Central America less than 500 years ago. The remains of the great Aztec temple in the centre of Mexico City, and some of the amazing objects found there since the 1980s, provide the starting point for an enquiry into Aztec beliefs, the story of their origins and everyday life in the Aztec Empire.

Programme 2: The end of the Aztec Empire

The second programme tells how the Spanish Conquistador, Hernán Cortés and his men sailed from Europe to what is now Mexico, and managed to overturn Moctezuma's great Aztec Empire in 1521. It also looks at what happened afterwards, explaining why present day Mexico is now a Spanish-speaking, Catholic country.

PREPARING FOR TEACHING THE THEMES

Before watching the programmes, you will need to prepare some materials and resources, in addition to those provided in the pack, to help you begin to involve the children in the themes:

- a globe or a large map of the world
- some foods from Mexico, such as tomatoes, peppers and chillies, maize (or corn on the cob), chocolate (or cocoa powder), an avocado, a picture of a turkey
- picture books or packs about life in Mexico, both present day and in Aztec times

- the companion BBC Primary Geography unit of three programmes on present-day Mexico
- picture books or packs about the Spanish Conquest of Mexico
- some Internet sites and materials with information about the themes.

Some of the activities require children to work in pairs or small groups, so you will need to organise the children accordingly. They may also need help with reading some of the texts and with carrying out personal research for further information.

You will find it useful to look through the vocabulary found on page 6 (especially the words derived from Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs) and to think about pronunciation. The Nahuatl words are mostly spelt phonetically.

NB The Aztecs were a comparatively recent society, more or less corresponding to the Tudor period in England. The Aztec Empire didn't last very long – around 200 years. It is easy to mistake them for an 'ancient civilisation', akin to the Egyptians.

INSIDE THE PACK

The resources are organised into two themes corresponding to the themes of the programmes. Each theme is subdivided into smaller areas of study, which are linked to the timeline, discussion points, activity sheets and photocards. The activities have been designed to cover key historical objectives, while also addressing some objectives for English and geography.

Using the sources of information

This section provides an introduction to the major sources of historical evidence on Aztec civilisation and the Spanish Conquest of Mexico. The sources can be used to meet learning objectives in history, geography and literacy and to make links with issues related to multicultural education.

Vocabulary list

This is a list of some of the words that children will need when talking and writing about the Aztecs. Some of these are words from Nahuatl and Spanish. They appear in the activity sheets and activities based on the photocards.

Timeline

The timeline on page 7 shows an outline of the most significant dates, events and developments in the Aztec period.





Programme 1: In search of the Aztecs

The first section is an overview of the history and some key characteristics of Aztec society as it was up to the arrival of the Europeans in what is now Mexico.

- **Discussion points to follow up the programme**

Suggestions are given for talking points and whole class activities that you might use after watching the first programme.

- **Activity sheets**

These are individual and group activities to develop children's historical and geographical understanding and ability, and literacy skills.

- **Programme 1 photocards**

These activities are based on photocards 1–4, supplied in the pack.

Programme 2: The end of the Aztec Empire

The first section is an overview of the key features, personalities and events of the Spanish Conquest of the Aztecs.

- **Discussion points to follow up the programme**

Suggestions are given for talking points and whole class activities that you might use after watching the second programme.

- **Activity sheets**

These are individual and group activities to develop children's historical and geographical understanding and ability, and literacy skills.

- **Programme 2 photocards**

These activities are based on photocards 5–8, supplied in the pack.

Resources for further research

A list of useful resources and Internet sites currently available to provide further information for your own reference or for follow-up research activities for the children.

Photocards

The photocards show examples of different historical sources for use in discussion, asking and answering questions and related history-focused activities.

Photocard 1: Aztec people teaching children their crafts, taken from the Codex Mendoza.

Photocard 2: The four fortunes of the maize, taken from the Codex Fejervary-Mayer.

Inset picture: a screen-fold codex.

Photocard 3: An Aztec temple and sacrifice, taken from the Codex Magliabechiano.

Photocard 4: Chalchiuhtlicue, goddess of water.

Photocard 5: The meeting of Cortés and Moctezuma, from the Lienzo de Tlaxcala.

Photocard 6: An Aztec shield. Helmet and sword similar to those used at the time.

Photocard 7: Jaguar Knight, taken from the Codex Magliabechiano.

Spanish soldiers, taken from a picture painted on ceramic tiles.

Eagle Warrior, taken from the Lienzo de Tlaxcala.

Photocard 8: Tlaloc, god of rain, taken from the Codex Laud.

Burning the Aztec temples, a drawing based on the Florentine Codex.

Huitzilopochtli, god of war.



USING THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

There is a vast amount of historical information available about the Aztecs and their conquest by the Spanish. This information falls into a number of different types:

- accessible written sources, which are mainly contemporary Spanish colonial texts or recent histories based on them
- a few remaining Aztec codices
- archaeological sites, such as the remains of Aztec pyramids and cities
- Aztec archaeological artefacts, such as everyday objects, and works of art and sculpture used in religious rituals
- stories and myths, such as the Aztec creation myth
- present day practices that reflect the Aztec past, such as arts and crafts, costumes and cooking, ritual music and dance
- Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, which is still spoken by some people in present-day Mexico.

NB Pupils should be alerted to the fact that most of the accessible written material that is often quoted is almost exclusively based on Spanish accounts – by Cortés, Sahagun, Diaz, de Acosta, Duran and many others. An Aztec account is available in English (see León-Portilla in the resources section).

Anthropological, geographical and archaeological information is provided mainly in the programmes, while artefacts, pictures and written sources form the majority of the historical sources used in the pack. The archaeological evidence and artefacts can help children understand some of the key characteristics of life in the Aztec Empire, particularly about religion and its importance in everyday life. Written sources can add more detail and explanation to deepen understanding, such as insight into what the opposing sides in the conflict thought at the time. They can be used to illustrate the different ways that events have been interpreted and why things happened as they did.

These different sources, therefore, can be used effectively to help children meet the learning objectives set out under the 'Knowledge, Skills and Understanding' of the National Curriculum for History: chronology, causation, knowledge of the key characteristics of Aztec society, interpretation, use of sources and communication. They also address objectives from the National Literacy Strategy, such as learning to understand different points of view.

Questioning lies at the heart of the effective use of historical sources and it is suggested that you begin with discussion and questioning, either as a whole class or with the children organised into small groups. Start with some open-ended questions to see what the children can draw from the sources on their own. Then you can begin to develop their ideas or direct them by using more specific questions. If the class is very experienced in the use of historical sources, or at the end of the topic, it may be useful to give them copies of the photocards to use in pairs or small groups as an assessment activity.

Cross-curricular links

Geographical sources include maps, a plan and photographs of the terrain and landscape. These are used in the activity sheets to make links with geography objectives, such as asking geographical questions, developing skills in using globes, maps and plans, describing different environments and extending their geographical knowledge of the world.

Links with the National Curriculum for English are numerous. The documents provided in the activity sheets, vocabulary list and timeline provide opportunities for reading, writing, speaking and listening and will enable children to develop and extend skills acquired during the literacy hour. They will develop new subject-specific vocabulary, skills in reading for information, skills in contributing to group discussions and understanding different points of view, which are also a central feature of working with historical sources.

There are opportunities for children to engage in group discussion and decision-making when working with the photocards.



Multicultural education

Investigating a different society provides an opportunity for children to learn how societies distant in both place and time can be interesting, exciting topics of study and how they have many similarities with our own present day society. Children can be encouraged to develop their knowledge, understanding and empathy with the struggles of a people to adapt and survive in a very different and sometimes harsh environment. They may begin to understand and respect how societies can develop differently from our own, depending on the way in which circumstances give rise to very different values, beliefs and practices.

More specifically, a study of the Aztecs will enable children to address the requirements of the National Curriculum for History in learning about 'the ideas, beliefs, attitudes and experiences of men, women and children in the past' and about 'the social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of ...societies... in the wider world'. (*National Curriculum Handbook for primary teachers in England* (1999: 105).

Adapting the resources for a different age group

The resources in the pack could be adapted effectively for children in Years 5 and 6 studying the geography and history of Mexico. They could use the teacher's timeline more directly, asking and answering questions about it and writing further information to add to it from their own research. The timeline could be converted into a large version for the wall for this purpose.

Older children could also make more direct use of the vocabulary list by incorporating the vocabulary into their own writing, extending the list and investigating features of words from different languages, such as the frequent use of the sound 'atl' in Nahuatl.

The activity sheets and photocards could be used to stimulate extended writing and further independent research and discussion. Other cross-curricular links could be developed by the children, such as role-play, drama and art.

VOCABULARY LIST



PEOPLE

Aztecs
 Mexica
 Moctezuma
 Cortés
 Conquistadors
 Europeans
 Spaniard
 Spanish



AZTEC LIFE

artefact
 chinampas/floating gardens
 codex/codices
 crafts
 cue/temple
 god/goddess
 myth
 market
 migrate/migration
 religion
 obsidian
 pictogram
 priest
 prophesy
 pyramid
 sacrifice
 scribe
 temple
 tassel
 tlaxcali/tortilla
 warfare
 victim

PLACES

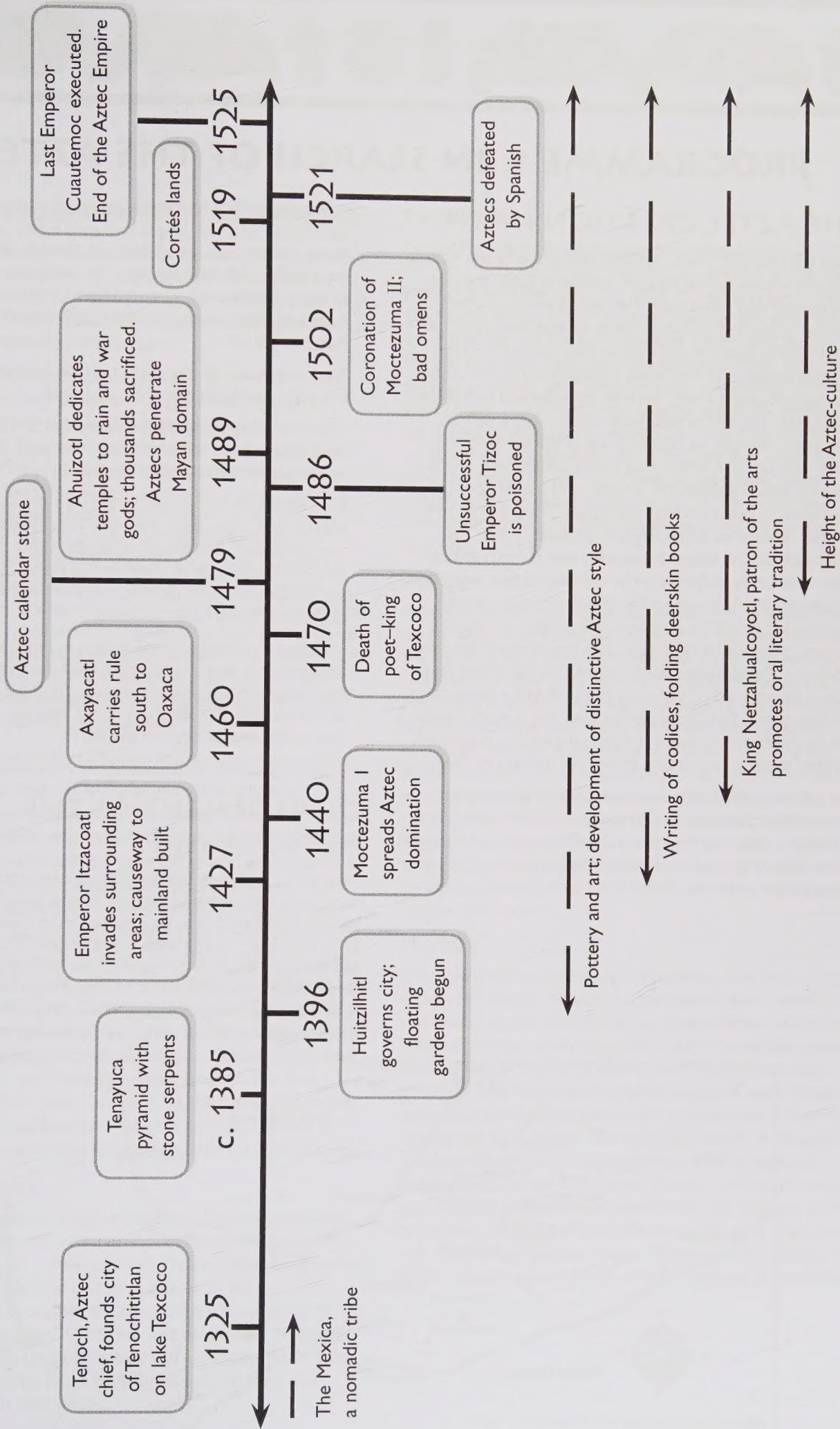
Spain
 Cuba
 Santiago
 America
 Aztec Empire
 Spanish Empire
 Bering Strait
 Atlantic Ocean
 Pacific Ocean
 Lake Texcoco
 Tenochtitlan
 Tlaxcala

THE CONQUEST

Catholic
 Christian/Christianity
 conquistador
 explorer/exploration
 weapons
 helmet
 knight
 monk
 musket
 ocean
 shield
 sword
 terrain
 warrior



TIMELINE OF THE AZTEC PERIOD





PROGRAMME 1: IN SEARCH OF THE AZTECS

THE AZTEC CREATION MYTH

There are probably many different reasons why the Aztecs, originally known as the Mexica, settled in Lake Texcoco. One reason may have been that they were so disliked by other groups of people living in central Mexico at the time that this was the only refuge they could find. Their religious beliefs and practices, although not unlike some that had preceded them, were so extreme and demanded such large numbers of sacrificial victims that they may have been rejected by people living in the surrounding areas. The place in which they finally settled was a large, swampy area, infested with snakes and mosquitoes; a most unlikely place for the beginnings of a great empire. Another reason, as some experts suggest, is that the Mexica chose the island because it was surrounded by water and easily defended from the other tribes living on the lake shore, from whom the Mexica initially 'rented' the island in return for payment of tributes. The water of the lake supplied fish and fowl, and the lakebed provided fertile soil. Rattlesnakes were plentiful on the island and were a valuable source of food (they are still a delicacy in Mexico today). The nopal cactus was also a most palatable and nourishing food, while the maguey cactus produced 'pulque' to drink and strong thread for making clothes.

The following story, however, was told by Aztecs who survived the Conquest as the reason for their choice of settlement. You may find this a useful story to tell the class and to initiate a discussion about the possible origins of the legend.

In the distant past, the Aztecs, or Mexica, as they were called, left their home in the north and began to travel southwards. They had lived in the caves of Aztlan for many years, but their gods had told them they must leave.

They wandered for many years in the wild lands of the north, until one day, their god said:

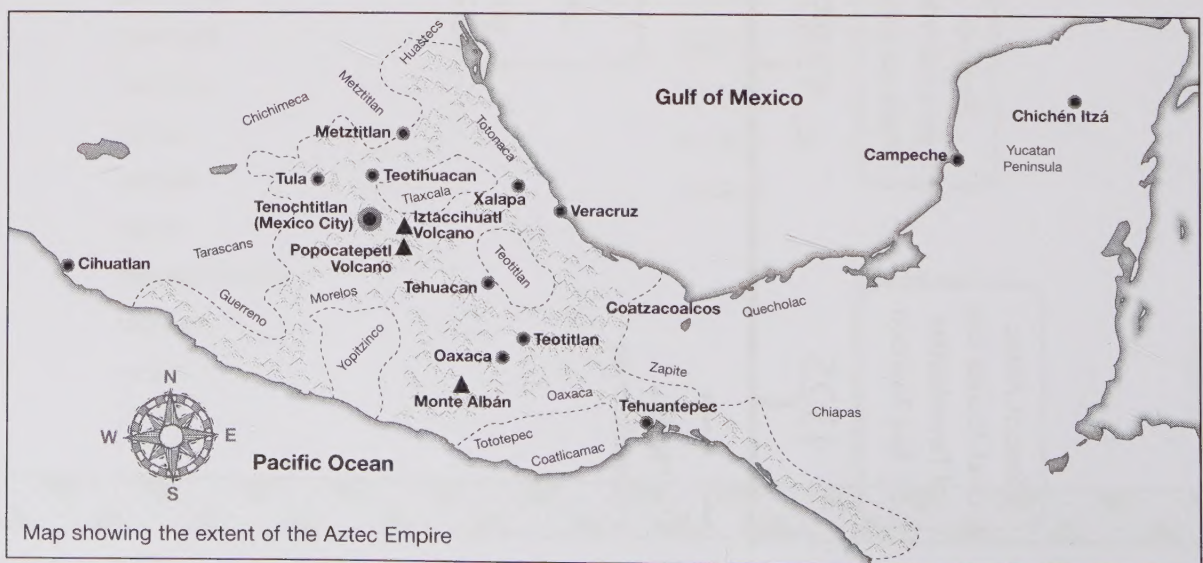
'Look for an eagle holding a serpent in its beak, seated on a cactus plant. When you see this sign, then this is where you must build your capital city.'

They continued to wander in the very dry lands of Mexico and, eventually, they saw exactly what the god had described. There was an eagle, with a serpent in its mouth, sitting on a nopal cactus plant. Unfortunately, the cactus plant was growing right in the middle of a large lake, called Lake Texcoco.

However, the beliefs of the Aztecs in their gods was very powerful and, undefeated, they went on to build their capital city in this very place. Their capital is now called Mexico City, after the name 'Mexica', and it is one of the largest cities in the world.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE AZTEC EMPIRE

Very soon, the lands that the Aztecs used for growing food were too limited to provide for the large numbers of people that lived there, so they began to create gardens, or 'chinampas'. These were areas of land created on the swampy areas and waters of the lake by building up platforms made of reeds and mud from the lakebed. Eventually this artificial land also became insufficient to meet the needs of the rising population, so the Aztecs



Map showing the extent of the Aztec Empire





began to trade with neighbouring groups of people. They traded goods, which they had made, for food, which was transported into the city by boat or across long causeways on the backs of porters. Curiously, the Aztecs did not develop the wheel, perhaps as it would not have been very useful in their island city, where water transport prevailed, or in the surrounding volcanic hills.

As time passed, succeeding generations of Aztec rulers began to exert their power on nearby tribes, marrying carefully to gain power, or attacking their neighbours and taking charge. The Aztecs tended not to occupy the land of conquered tribes, but levied tribute payments from them. Before long, the Aztecs controlled a large part of what is now central Mexico, each region having a governor responsible to the Aztec Emperor and his advisers. The empire was extensive and ruled by an all-powerful Emperor who was looked on almost as a god himself. However, control was loose, and there were several groups that resented domination by the Aztecs, not least because of their religious wars and sacrificial rites. There were also some tribes that the Aztecs never conquered, who remained their enemies. This was the state of the Empire when Cortés and his troops arrived.

Society

Aztec society was hierarchical, with the Emperor, his advisers and the nobility considered the most important. Priests and military leaders ranked as nobles and below these were the merchants and craft workers. The least important people in Aztec society were the agricultural workers and slaves, although slavery was not the same as in Europe, since it was possible to 'buy yourself out' of this condition. This strict hierarchy was reflected in the clothes that different people wore and in how they spoke. The children of the nobility were sent to separate schools that followed a different curriculum and taught different styles of speech. The emperor was treated almost as a god-like figure and no one was permitted to look upon his face. At the other end of the scale, slaves could be put forward by their owners as victims in the sacrificial rites demanded by their religion.

Urban centres

The Aztecs, like many native people of Mesoamerica and South America, and unlike their counterparts in the north, lived in large civic, urban centres. These contained, like our modern cities, the central buildings of the administration and government and the key religious temples and palaces. Urban life had developed to such an extent by the time of the Spanish Conquest that those who saw the Aztec cities were impressed by their size, orderliness and cleanliness.

Family life

Family life seems to have been very highly organised. From birth, a child's future was mapped out and he or she was trained to fulfil that role. The roles of men and boys were completely different from those of women and girls. While the males learned the art of warfare, fishing and hunting, the females were occupied with domestic work. Boys were sent to school to learn different skills, depending on their social class. All children were treated extremely strictly compared to present day standards. They were harshly punished for any deviation from the rules that were laid down for them. Family life is likely to have been heavily influenced by religious practices and by the outcomes of warfare, since sons were expected to fight to acquire sacrificial victims.

Religion

Religious beliefs and practices dominated the Aztecs' way of life. There was a precise calendar for the year, showing the religious feast days and sacrificial days. The Aztecs believed that their gods needed a supply of human hearts and blood in order to maintain the order of the universe, and to ensure the daily rising of the sun and the falling of the rain, both of which were vital to life. This had led to the development of a system of ritual sacrifice on an enormous scale. Many thousands of victims could be sacrificed to the gods on a single day. Most families were affected by these rites, since slaves, children or young men captured in battle by other families' sons could also be offered for sacrifice. Each home contained shrines and images of the gods.

Warfare

This was a very different style of fighting from that known in Europe. The Aztecs, because of their beliefs and practices, did not fight to kill their enemies in battle. Greater prestige, even acceptance into the nobility, could be attained by capturing enemy warriors for sacrificial offerings. This explains why Aztec weapons were clubs for wounding and disabling the enemy, rather than sharp and pointed for killing them. Warriors progressed to become a Jaguar Knight or an Eagle Warrior, with increasingly elaborate costumes and status. Indeed, the entire family of a successful warrior could benefit from his success on the battlefield. Sometimes special ceremonial wars were held with neighbouring tribes, called 'Flowery Wars', during which the aim was to take as many captives as possible.





Trade

The Aztec Empire started and expanded as a direct result of trade for food and commodities with other groups in central Mexico. As they extended their trading interests further afield, spying and warfare followed, leading to the establishment of colonial territories that extended to cover the whole of central Mexico by the time of the Spanish arrival. These colonies were obliged to give the Aztecs tributes, in the form of goods and produce that the Aztecs needed and could not provide for themselves. Lists of the tributes they sent can be seen in some of the Aztec codices and are a useful source of information about what the Aztecs ate and used in their daily lives.

Food

The staple diet of the Aztecs was maize. Maize was first cultivated in the valleys of Mexico and is still the staple food of most Mexicans today. The maize was ground into flour using a 'metate' (a large grinding stone), then shaped by hand into a flat pancake and heated on a flat griddle. The resulting 'tlaxcali' (tortilla) was filled with various vegetables, sometimes meat and very hot chillies. Other Aztec foods included tomatoes (both red and green), peppers, avocado, cocoa and turkey. There were few large animals in Mexico before the Europeans arrived, but one meat source the Aztecs bred was small, hairless dogs.

Arts and crafts

Featherwork was the most highly prized craft in Aztec times, and was widely used in making clothes, headdresses and even to decorate shields and other weapons. Few precious stones have survived the Spanish Conquest, although it is known that stonework was an important skill. In particular, jade-work was very important, and appears in many religious ceremonial objects. There is little sign of the gold and silver ornamental work that the Aztecs produced, as the Spanish melted down vast quantities to ship back to Spain, although some excellent examples have been preserved. Woven goods, made from cactus thread or cotton, were made extensively, along with some metalwork in the form of small religious images of the gods or tools, which were mainly for religious or domestic purposes. Pottery was common, both for everyday items and as an art in its own right. Many ceremonial vessels and statues were made using ceramics.

Programme summary

Presenter Jayne Constantinis starts in the centre of busy Mexico City looking for evidence of the Aztec Empire that existed there 500 years before. She explores the archaeological excavations and helps us imagine what the Aztecs' grand buildings and their island city of Tenochtitlan might have looked like. We see how the Aztecs developed their Empire and try to understand some of their beliefs and rituals, including human sacrifice. The programme then looks at the daily life of the Aztec people, including their crafts and unique food, as well as the important role of warriors and priests.

Discussion points to follow up the programme

- Use the globe of the world to help the children locate America and then Mexico.
- Show the children a map of Mexico and the Aztec Empire (see page 8).
- Talk about how we know about the Aztecs, using the following discussion points:
 - finding clues about the past, for example from the ground
 - how we can work out what life was like by thinking about what is left.
- Discuss what sorts of things will last in the ground for hundreds of years, for example will feathers, clothes, wooden things still be there? Discuss why not.
- Ask the class what sorts of things might be preserved – pottery, stone, metal etc.
- Discuss the sorts of artefacts that have been found, such as gold and silver ornaments, masks decorated with jade, stone knives, carvings and statues made from stone and pottery.
- Make a chart on the board to complete with the class:

LIKELY TO SURVIVE	NOT LIKELY TO SURVIVE

- Ask the class what information about the Aztecs we can find out from the objects or artefacts that have been discovered, for example what they wore, what they ate and the things they used to do, such as religious rituals.

ACTIVITY SHEETS AND PHOTOCARDS

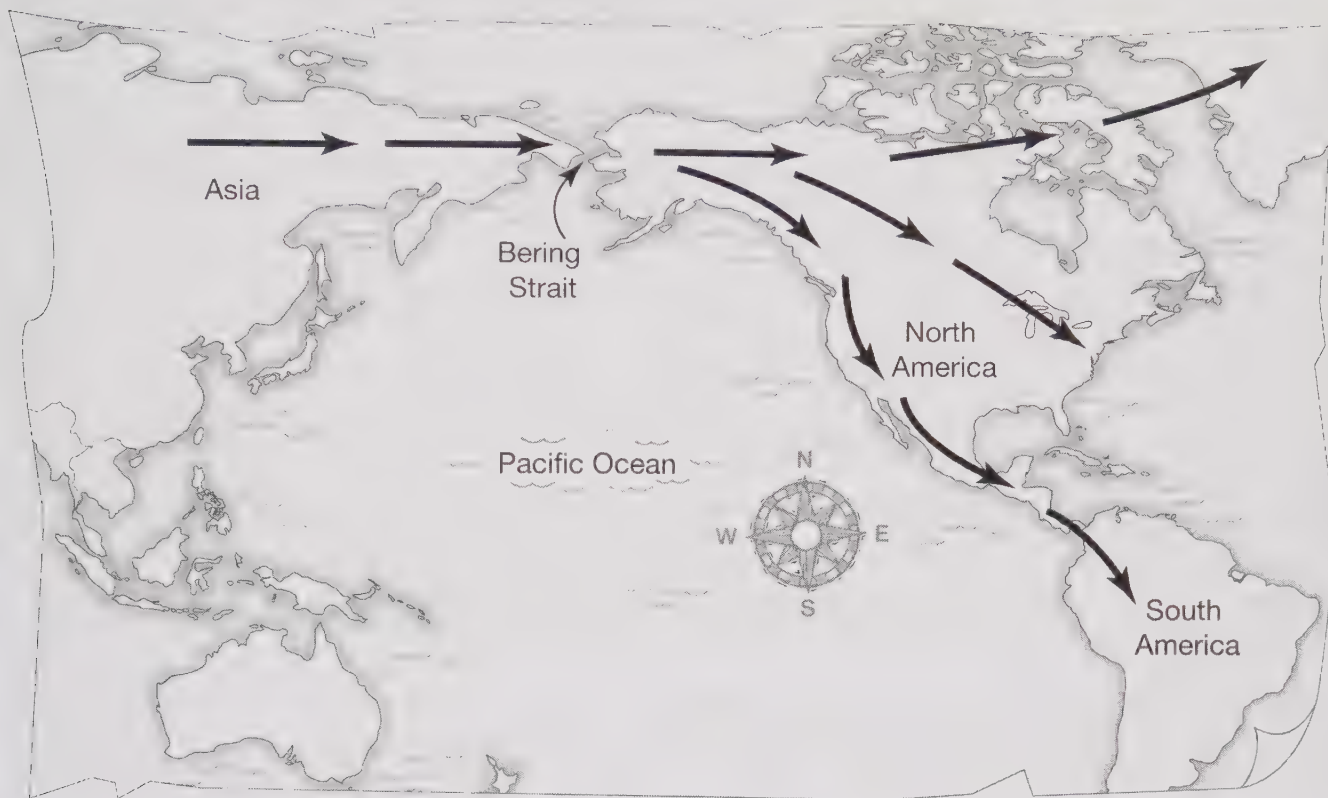
Introduce the activity sheets and photocards for this programme (activity sheets 1–6 and Photocards 1–4). Look at one of the photocards as an example and ask the children what it shows and then ask more detailed questions about its contents.

Organise the children in pairs, small groups or working individually as appropriate and set them the tasks shown on activity sheets 1–6. They can also use photocards 1–4 for discussion in pairs or small groups before completing the activities suggested to accompany them on the Programme 1 photocards page.



HOW PEOPLE MOVED FROM ASIA TO AMERICA

Working with your partner, look at this map.



The map shows what archaeologists and historians think happened during the last Ice Age – about 10 000 years ago. The evidence tells us that people migrated to present-day America, travelling east and then southwards. They could have crossed what is now called the Bering Strait on foot because, at that time, the sea channel would have been frozen.

- In what direction did these earliest people move when they crossed through America?

- Look at your globe of the world. From which part of the world do you think these early peoples migrated?

- Name some of the countries that are in this area today.

GLOSSARY

archaeologists – people who study objects from the past

migrate – move or travel to a new place





HOW PEOPLE MOVED FROM EUROPE TO AMERICA

Working with your partner, look at this map.

Many thousands of years after the first migrations of people into Central America, Columbus set sail from Europe in 1492, hoping to find a new sea route to take him around the world to the countries in the East, such as China. Instead, he landed in what we know as the Caribbean. Although Columbus didn't realise it, he had landed somewhere



completely unknown to Europeans. Many other explorers made the same journey after him, to America and to the islands in the West Indies.

- Where did Columbus sail from when he set off on his first voyage of exploration?

- In which direction did he sail?

- Where did he think he had sailed to?

- Where had he actually sailed to?

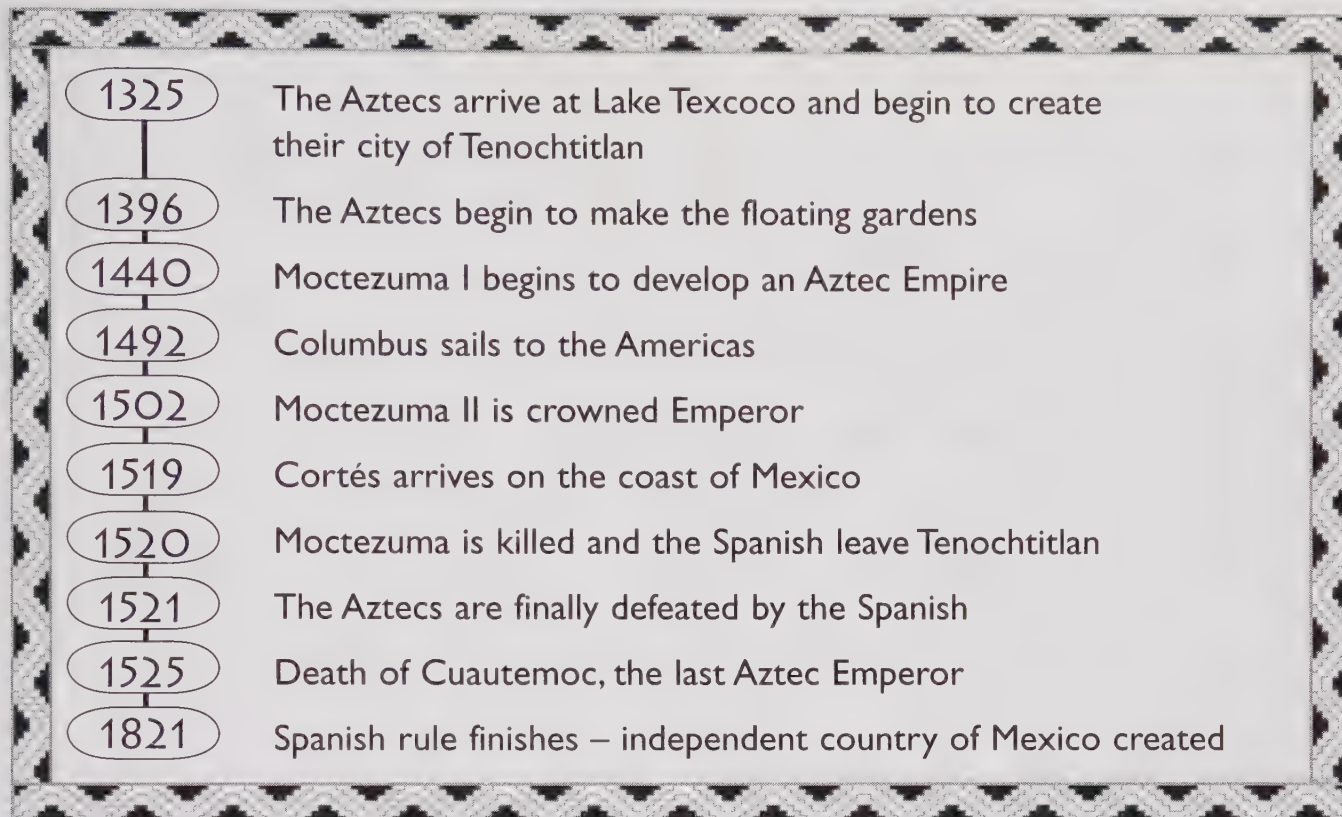
- What direction did he take to get back?

- Write down three reasons why you think people kept migrating to America from different parts of the world.





TIMELINE



Working with your partner, look at the dates on the timeline and at the key events that it shows. Complete these sentences:

- I think that the Aztec Empire lasted for _____ years.

- It only took _____ years for Cortés and his supporters to defeat the Aztec Empire.

- I think the end of the Empire was in _____ because that was the year when

- Use the information in this timeline to make your own timeline. You could add some pictures and other information that you find from your own reading and from websites that your teacher has chosen for you from the Internet.

GLOSSARY

empire – a group of countries or areas ruled by one dominant country

emperor – supreme ruler of an empire





AZTEC NUMBERS

									
1	2	3	4	5	10	15	20	200	400

- Write down the numbers represented by these symbols:











- Draw symbols that you think the Aztecs would have used for:

4

10

20

28

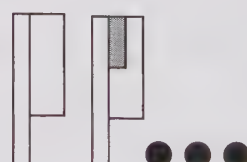
50

- Work out these Aztec numbers:











- Use the Aztec symbols to make up three numbers of your own and ask the children in your group to work out what they are.
- Now make up some sums using Aztec numbers for your group to work out.



A DESCRIPTION OF AZTEC TOWNS

Read this description of the area near to Tenochtitlan.

And when we saw all those cities and villages built in the water, and other great towns on dry land, and that straight and level causeway leading to Mexico, we were astounded. These great towns and cues and buildings rising from the water, all made of stone, seemed like an enchanted vision... Indeed, some of our soldiers asked whether it was not all a dream.

- Who do you think wrote this description? Was it a Spanish person or an Aztec?

- How can you tell who wrote it? Write down the words that tell us this.

This second extract was written by the same person. It is a description of what could be seen from the top of the Great Temple in Tenochtitlan.

We saw the three causeways that led into Mexico... We saw the fresh water which came from Chapultepec to supply the city and the bridges that were constructed at intervals on the causeways so that the water could flow in and out from one part of the lake to another. We saw a great number of canoes, some coming with provisions and others returning with cargo and merchandise; and we saw too that one could not pass from one house to another of that great city and the other cities that were built on the water except over wooden drawbridges or by canoe. We saw cues and shrines in these cities that looked like gleaming white towers and castles: a marvellous sight. All the houses had flat roofs, and on the causeways were other small towers and shrines built like fortresses.

- Make a list of the things that could be seen from the top of the Great Temple.

- Imagine you are an Aztec. Write about your city as if you are very proud of it.

GLOSSARY

astounded – very surprised
cargo and merchandise – things to sell
causeway – a roadway across the water
cue – a temple

provisions – food
shrines – holy places with images of the gods
vision – imaginary sight of great beauty



A DESCRIPTION OF AN AZTEC MARKET

Read this extract written by Bernal Díaz about what the Spanish soldiers saw in the huge market in Tenochtitlan.

Let us begin with the dealers in gold, silver, and precious stones, feathers, cloaks, and embroidered goods, and male and female slaves who are also sold there. Next there were those who sold coarser cloth, and cotton goods and fabrics made of twisted thread, and there were chocolate merchants with their chocolate... There were those who sold sisal cloth and ropes and the sandals they wear on their feet, which are made from the same plant. All these were kept in one part of the market, in the place assigned to them, and in another part were the skins of tigers and lions*, otters, jackals, and deer, badgers, mountain cats and other wild animals.

There were sellers of kidney beans and sage and other vegetables and herbs in another place, and in yet another they were selling fowls, and birds with great dewlaps (turkeys), also rabbits, hares, deer, young ducks, little dogs and other such creatures. Then there were the fruiterers; and the women who sold cooked food, flour and honey cake. Then came pottery of all kinds, from big water-jars to little jugs, displayed in its own place, also honey, honey-paste, and other sweets like nougat.

I am forgetting the sellers of salt and flint knives, and how they split them off the stone itself... They sell axes too, made of bronze and copper and tin...

* There were no tigers or lions in Mexico. Díaz probably used these words to describe animals he had not seen before, such as the jaguar.

- Fill in the boxes with the things that were for sale in the market.

PRECIOUS THINGS	BIRDS AND ANIMALS	ANIMAL SKINS	FRUITS AND VEGETABLES	TOOLS	OTHER THINGS MADE BY THE AZTECS

GLOSSARY

- assigned** – given to
- coarse** – rough
- embroidered** – decorated with colourful stitches
- sisal** – a plant from which tough, strong thread and cloth is made



PHOTOCARD 1

Working with your group or partner, look at the drawings of Aztec people teaching children how to do their craft work. Talk about the things you notice in the pictures.

Now work out some sentences to answer these questions.

- What do you notice about the work of the boys and the girls?
Make a list of the differences you can see.

- Describe the jobs they are learning to do.

- How has the scribe shown that the people are talking to the children?

- How many tlaxcali (tortillas) are the children allowed to eat each day?

GLOSSARY

scribe – writer
tlaxcali/tortilla – flat bread



PHOTOCARD 2

Working with your group or partner, look at this page from an Aztec Codex.

These codices were folding books that were made by Aztec scribes. The pictograms on this card show what happened to maize in different kinds of weather. Maize was very important because it provided food for the Aztecs. They made their tlaxcali from maize flour. Look at the two pictures at the bottom of the card. One shows the maize growing well, while the other is being scorched by the hot sun.

Talk about the two pictures and then work out some answers to these questions.

- Look at the two pictures at the bottom of the card. Describe the figures that represent the maize.

- What kind of figure is planting and growing the maize in each pictogram?

- List the creatures that can be seen attacking the weak maize plant that is being scorched by the sun.

- Why do you think these pictograms have been called the 'Four fortunes of the maize'?

GLOSSARY

- codex** – a book containing pictograms
- fortune** – luck
- maize** – corn
- pictogram** – picture with a meaning
- scorched** – burned
- scribe** – writer
- tlaxcali** – flat bread



PHOTOCARD 3

Look at this drawing of a sacrifice taking place.

It was made by an Aztec after the Conquest to show what life was like in Aztec times and what their religion was like. It shows the victim having his heart removed by the priests with an obsidian knife. They are all in front of their 'cue' at the top of a pyramid. The heart is offered to the gods as the people watch from below. The Aztecs believed that the gods, and especially the Sun God, needed human hearts and blood so that the sun would rise each day and make the maize grow.

- Now complete these sentences using these words:

SUN

SACRIFICE

GODS

The Aztecs believed that the _____ needed human hearts and blood.

They thought that this was what kept the _____ rising each day.

They were afraid that if they did not _____ people, then the world would end.

- Use the words below to write a short paragraph. Explain the Aztecs' reasons for carrying out these sacrifices.

GODS

RISE EACH DAY

SACRIFICE

HEARTS AND BLOOD

RELIGION

SUN

- Find out how to make a 'mind map'. Use the words in the box to make a mind map showing why the Aztecs had sacrifices.

GLOSSARY

cue – temple
obsidian – hard, sharp stone from a volcano
priest – religious ruler

religion – beliefs about the gods
sacrifice – killing something as an offering to the gods



PHOTOCARD 4

Working with your partner, look at this statue of the goddess Chalchiuhtlicue.

It is an artefact that has been found in Mexico. It has been buried in the ground for hundreds of years but is now in a museum in the city. Chalchiuhtlicue was the goddess of water. The goddess was also known as 'she of the jade skirt' and was always painted blue like the water of a lake. People worshipped her and made sacrifices to her. The statue is dressed in the same way as an Aztec girl, so it is useful for finding out how the Aztecs dressed.

Talk about the picture and think about what it shows. Then write down your answers to these questions.

- What do you think the statue is made of?

- Look at her headdress. Describe what it is like using the following words: **layers, tassels, pleated bow**.

- Describe the costume of the goddess, including her cape, skirt and sandals.

- Explain how she did her hair.

GLOSSARY

artefact – object
goddess – female god
worship – pray



PROGRAMME 2: THE END OF THE AZTEC EMPIRE

The Spanish Conquistadors

The Spanish invaders were very experienced in warfare, having just succeeded in expelling the Moors (Arabs) from Spain after a civil war that had lasted for hundreds of years. As a result, they were supremely confident and well equipped. In addition, they had many motives for taking over new lands: to impose their 'one true faith' – Catholic Christianity; to acquire colonies for the crown of Spain; to gain personal prestige, power and wealth. They were a tightly knit band of men from the same region in Spain; some of them were related or were long-standing friends prior to the expedition.

Cortés and Moctezuma

As soon as news spread in Spain about the new lands Columbus had seen, many Spanish treasure-seekers and explorers set off for 'The Indies'. Their first ports of call were Cuba and Hispaniola (Haiti). Hernán Cortés was one of these young adventurers who, although having trained as a lawyer, sought to make his fortune in Cuba. However, he soon heard of fresh possibilities for further exploration and set off for the mainland in 1519 with a band of about 530 Europeans, a few horses and some muskets and cannon.

Cortés was 34 years old and the epitome of the successful soldier. He was a good leader but with a ruthless streak. He ordered his men to burn their ships at Veracruz when they embarked on their journey inland, so that they could not desert him and return to Cuba. He was an effective strategist and politician, manoeuvring successfully among the warring groups of indigenous people to gain the support of those, such as the Tlaxcalans, who opposed their Aztec rulers. He was aided in this by a local woman called Doña Marina, also called Malinche, who had been given to him initially as a slave but who subsequently became Cortés' close companion. Malinche learned to speak Spanish and was then able to translate for him during his negotiations with the Aztecs. In the end, it was these skills and advantages that enabled the Spanish to gain their victory.

Moctezuma, by comparison, was a very reflective, superstitious ruler, trained mainly to carry out his religious duties. He sent numerous offerings and gifts as Cortés marched towards the Aztec capital. One story is that he thought the Spanish invaders were gods, returning to Mexico as foretold in an ancient Aztec legend. Once he saw the full might displayed by the small Spanish force, he appears to have become almost paralysed, unable to take decisive action until it was too late, and the Spanish

were already within his capital city. The Spanish held Moctezuma under house arrest and he was eventually killed, although how this happened is unclear.

Weapons, horses and tactics

While the Indians of Mesoamerica fought with clubs tipped with obsidian stone, the Spanish carried metal swords and muskets. They also had horses that instilled terror at first among the native Indians, who had never seen animals like these before. It was reported that, even if they succeeded in killing the rider, the beast continued to run, indicating that they did not even realise at first that horse and man were two separate creatures. The Indians concluded that these must be some sort of magical creatures. Cortés was clear in his tactics, aiming to create fear in the Aztec leadership. He set out to spread panic with his guns, canons and horses, and with deliberately violent assaults on any towns that he thought were allies of the Aztecs. He also used siege warfare effectively, another tactic not used in Mexico, which left the Indians unprepared.

The clash of cultures

There was a clear, unbridgeable divide between the attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviour of the two opposing sides. Religious differences were paramount, with the Catholic Spanish horrified at the practices of human sacrifice that they observed, forgetting the burnings at the stake and garrottings that were commonplace in Europe at the time! Styles of warfare and religious rites were so different that they eventually cost the Aztecs their Empire, fulfilling their belief that this was, certainly for their own empire, the fifth and final sun.

The aftermath

The immediate aftermath of the Conquest was relentless. Priests, rulers and elders were hunted down and killed, temples were razed to the ground and churches built in their place, often using the same stones. Different beliefs, language and customs were imposed by the new rulers, and the Aztecs became second class citizens and labourers in their own country. Over several hundred years during the colonial era and beyond, the Spanish exploited the land, its people and its resources through the 'hacienda' system. The indigenous population declined greatly, due not only to ill-treatment, but also to diseases brought to Mexico from Europe, such as smallpox and influenza, against which the native people had no immunity. Gradually, with intermarriage, a mixed race grew up, known as 'mestizo', which now forms the majority of the Mexican population. A process called 'acculturation' took place, where there was a gradual mixing of the two cultures.



The Spanish called their Central American colony 'New Spain' and ruled it for 300 years. In 1821 the independent country of Mexico was created, and took the image of an eagle on a cactus with a serpent for their nation's flag. When looking at present day maps of Mexico, it is important to realise that New Spain and independent Mexico was originally much larger, and included much of present day California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas until these areas were taken over by the United States in 1848. (This explains the Spanish names in those American states, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Fe, Amarillo, and the arbitrary nature of the present US/Mexican border.)

- Discuss what the Spanish brought to Mexico and ask the children about the legacy of the Aztecs.

ACTIVITY SHEETS AND PHOTOCARDS

Organise the children in pairs, small groups or working individually as appropriate and set them the tasks shown on activity sheets 7–12. Less able readers will need support with the texts on some of the sheets.

They can also use photocards 5–8 for discussion in pairs or small groups before completing the activities suggested to accompany them on the Programme 2 photocards page.

Programme summary

This programme starts with the arrival in 1519 of the Spanish, led by Hernan Cortés and tells how he and a few hundred men managed to overturn the Aztec Empire under their leader Moctezuma. The programme goes on to explain what happened next – how the Spanish destroyed the Aztecs' buildings and converted the people to Christianity, which explains why modern Mexico is a Spanish speaking, Catholic country.

Discussion points to follow up the programme

- Review briefly the map showing the Aztec Empire and the key features of Aztec society that were covered in programme 1.
- Talk about Cortés, who he was, where he came from and the kind of person he was (see notes on Cortés, above).
- Talk about the kind of terrain that Cortés and his troops travelled over on their journey inland: very mountainous in places, with deep gorges and ravines; hot, dry lands nearer to Tenochtitlan; and two huge volcanoes.
- Discuss the significance of Malinche, or Doña Marina, who had great power, acting as interpreter between Cortés, his loyal allies and the Aztecs.
- Discuss whether it was just due to good luck that the Tlaxcalans decided to join Cortés.
- Ask the children to think of reasons why Moctezuma should invite the Spaniards into the city and list the reasons they give on the board.
- Talk about the final battle, where the Aztecs fought to the death. Discuss the meaning of the word 'siege'. Link this idea to European battles.
- Discuss the destruction of the Aztec way of life. Ask the children if they think it was the right thing for the Spanish conquistadors to do.
- Explain how the whole of Mexico was taken over and called 'New Spain'; it became a colony of the Spanish Empire. Discuss the meanings of 'colony' and 'empire'.





A MAP OF CORTÉS' ROUTE TO TENOCHTITLAN



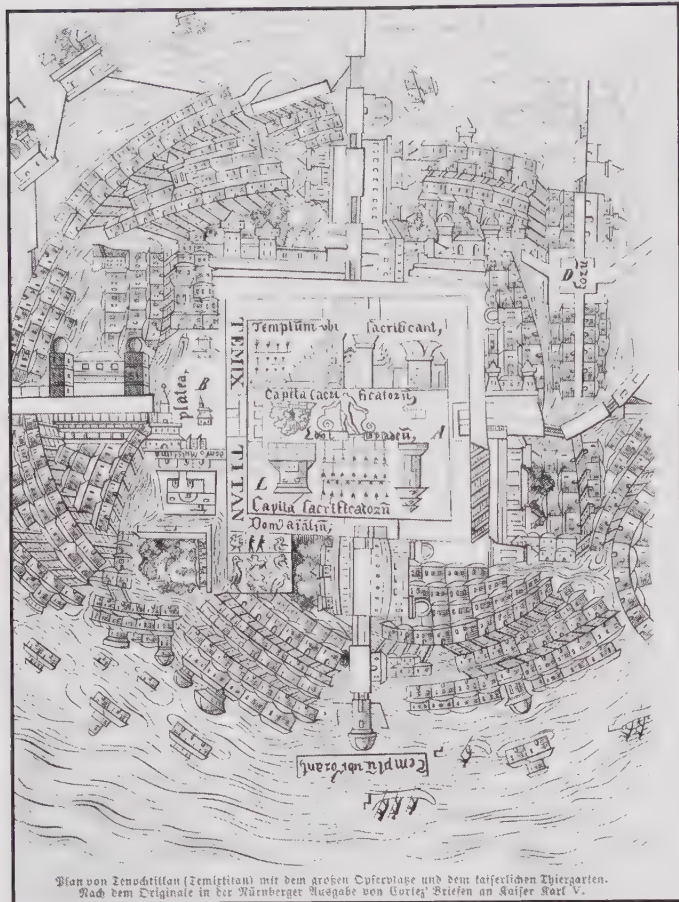
Look at this map with your partner and discuss it. Then write down your answers to these questions.

- Where did Cortés begin his journey when he set off to explore Mexico?

- Describe Cortés' journey from what you can see on the map.

- How do you think Cortés found out about Tenochtitlan and how did he know how to find it?





A PLAN OF TENOCHTITLAN

This plan was drawn by Cortés himself when he arrived at the Aztec capital city. Look at it carefully with your partner and then answer these questions.

- Why do you think Cortés made this plan of the city?

- What special features of the city does it show?

© Mary Evans Picture Library/Cortes plan of Tenochtitlan from Das Alte Mexico

- How did people get across the lake to get into the city?

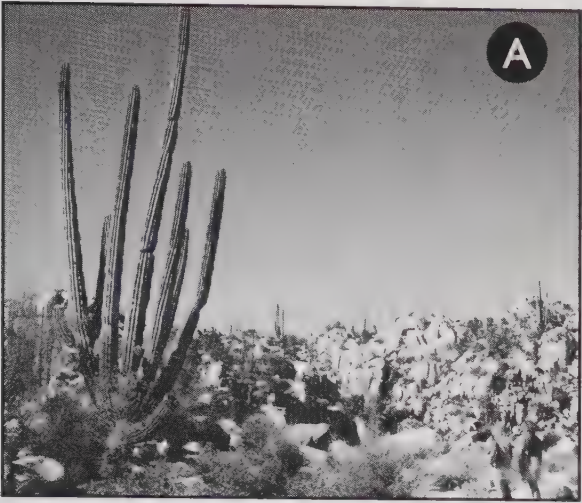
- Draw details taken from the plan to complete this key:

KEY

House	Temple	Causeway
Water	Tower	



THE LAND CORTÉS TRAVELLED ON HIS WAY THROUGH THE AZTEC EMPIRE



© Alamy Images



© Corbis/Sergio Dorantes

Look at the photographs showing the terrain that the Spanish soldiers passed through on their way to the Aztec capital. They had to travel over high mountains, across deep gorges and through flat, dry lands, full of cactus plants.

- Write down two **adjectives** that describe the terrain in picture A.

- Write down two **adjectives** that describe the terrain in picture B.

- Write some sentences to describe what kind of lands, creatures and plants the Spanish soldiers might have seen on the way. You may need to find out some information from books.

- Imagine you are one of the soldiers, travelling over this very rough land for great distances on foot or horseback. Describe what your journey was like and how you felt.

GLOSSARY

gorge – a narrow opening between the mountains

terrain – land





GREEDY FOR GOLD

This is an extract from the Aztec account of the Conquest of Mexico. Read it through, then talk about it with your partner. Discuss what happened and what the Aztecs thought.

Then Moctezuma dispatched various chiefs. They went out to meet the Spaniards in the vicinity of Popocatepetl and Iztactepetl, there in the Eagle Pass.

They gave the 'gods' ensigns of gold, and ensigns of quetzal feathers, and golden necklaces. And when they were given these presents, the Spaniards burst into smiles; their eyes shone with pleasure; they were delighted by them. They picked up the gold and fingered it like monkeys; they seemed to be transported by joy, as if their hearts were illuminated and made new.

The truth is that they longed and lusted for gold. Their bodies swelled with greed, and their hunger was ravenous; they hungered like pigs for that gold.

- How do we know that this is written from the Aztecs' point of view?

- What did the Aztecs think the Spanish soldiers were when they first arrived?

- What did they discover once they had met them?

- Do you think the Aztecs were right to think what they did?

GLOSSARY

account – description
dispatched – sent out
ensign – symbol or badge
illuminated – lit up
in the vicinity of – near

quetzal – a rare bird from the rainforest, with long, bright green feathers
ravenous – very hungry
transported – carried away





AN ACCOUNT OF TENOCHTITLAN AFTER THE AZTECS HAD BEEN DEFEATED

Read this account very carefully.

We could not walk without treading on the bodies and heads of dead Indians. ...Most of the warriors who had crowded in from all the provinces and subject towns had died.

For three whole days and nights they never ceased streaming out, and all three causeways were crowded with men, women and children so thin, sallow, dirty and stinking that it was pitiful to see them. Once the city was free from them Cortés went out to inspect it. We found the houses full of corpses and some poor Mexicans still in them who could not move away.

The city looked as if it had been ploughed up. The roots of any edible greenery had been dug out, boiled, and eaten, and they had even cooked the bark of some of the trees. There was no fresh water to be found; all of it was brackish.

- What does this account describe?

- How do you think the writer felt when he saw these scenes?

GLOSSARY

brackish – salty and dirty

cease – end

edible – fit to eat

ploughed up – dug up

provinces – areas around the city

sallow – sickly yellow





A POEM ABOUT THE END OF THE AZTEC EMPIRE

Flowers and songs of sorrow

*Nothing but flowers and songs of sorrow
are left in Mexico and Tlatelolco,
where once we saw warriors and wise men.*

*We know it is true
that we must perish,
for we are mortal men.
You, the Giver of Life,
you have ordained it.*

*We wander here and there
in our desolate poverty.*

*We are mortal men.
We have seen bloodshed and pain
where once we saw beauty and valour.*

*We are crushed to the ground;
we lie in ruins.
There is nothing but grief and suffering
in Mexico and Tlatelolco,
where once we saw beauty and valour.*

*Have you grown weary of your servants?
Are you angry with your servants,
O Giver of Life?*

Read the poem very carefully, and then answer these questions.

- Who do think probably wrote this poem?
Was it an Aztec or a Spanish person?
Give a list of the words that tell us which side
would have written such verses.

- Who does the writer blame for the
Aztec defeat?

- Why do you think this is?

- Look again at the accounts on activity sheets
11 and 12. Explain why they are so different.

GLOSSARY

grief – sadness

mortal – alive, human

ordained – ordered

perish – die

valour – bravery





PHOTOCARD 5

Working with your partner, look at the picture showing the meeting of Cortés and Moctezuma.
Talk about what you can see and what you think is happening. Then work out your answers and ideas and take it in turns to write them down.

- Describe the person that you think is Cortés.
- How is Moctezuma dressed? Write down what he is wearing.
- Why are there more men standing behind Moctezuma?
- Why are there animals and birds in the picture?
- You can see a woman standing just behind Cortés' chair. Her name was Malinche, or Doña Marina. What do you think she is doing?



PHOTOCARD 6

Look at the Aztec shield, and complete these sentences:

- This shield is decorated with _____

- I think it looks very _____

Look at the helmet and sword and complete these sentences:

- These are weapons like the ones that belonged to the _____

- I think they look _____

PHOTOCARD 7

Here are three kinds of warriors or soldiers. Some are Aztec and some are Spanish. There is a Jaguar Knight, some Spanish soldiers and an Eagle Warrior.

- Explain how you know which are Aztec warriors and which are Spanish soldiers.

- Why do you think the Aztec warriors had names like 'Jaguar Knight' and 'Eagle Warrior'?

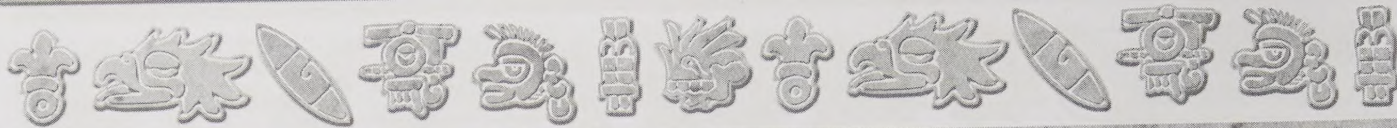


PHOTOCARD 8

This photocard shows the Spanish conquerors burning down the two shrines on the top of the great temple in Tenochtitlan. These shrines were dedicated to the gods Tlaloc, the rain god, and Huitzilopochtli, the war god. Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli are shown on the left and right of the photocard.

- Talk about the pictures with your group, then decide together **why** you think the Spanish soldiers did this. Write down the list of reasons you have agreed together.

- Imagine you are an Aztec watching your temple and shrines being burned down. Talk to your group about what it must have been like. Write down your ideas about what the Aztecs must have thought and felt like.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further reading for teachers

Aztec society

Davies, N., *The Ancient Kingdoms of Mexico*, Penguin, 1990

Townsend, R.F., *The Aztecs*, Thames and Hudson, 1992

Soustelle, J., *Daily life of the Aztecs*, Phoenix Press, 2002

The Spanish Conquest

Díaz, B., *The Conquest of New Spain*, Penguin, 1963
(Translated from contemporary source written some time after the conquest.)

Gruzinski, S., *The Aztecs: Rise and Fall of an Empire*, Thames and Hudson, 1987

León-Portilla, M. (ed), *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*, Beacon Press, 1962 (Translated from a contemporary source.)

Schwartz, S.B., *Victors and Vanquished*, Bedford/St Martin's, 2000

After the Conquest

De las Casas, B., *A short account of the destruction of the Indies*, Penguin Classics, 1992 (Translated from a contemporary account.)

Books for children

Burrell, R., *Life in the time of Moctezuma and The Aztecs*, Cherrytree, 1992

Chrisp, P., *The Spanish Conquests in the New World*, Wayland, 1993

Hicks, P., *The Aztecs*, Wayland, 1993

Macdonald, F., *Spaniards and Aztecs*, Simon & Schuster, 1992

Mason, J., *Explorations resource book*, Longman, 1992

Nicholson, R. & Watts, R., *The Aztecs*, Two-Can, 1991

Triggs, T.T., *The Aztecs*, Folens, 1995

PHOTOPACKS AND OTHER RESOURCES

Mexican Gallery Resource Pack, British Museum Education Service, 1994

Aztecs Photopack, Folens History, 1997

Slide Pack and Teacher's Notes, Mexicolore

WEBSITES

mexicolore.co.uk

This is a useful website for information, comment on publications and links to child-friendly websites, such as those produced by other primary schools.

thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass

Many artefacts can be found on this section of the British Museum website.

Indians.org/welker/aztec.htm

Full of information from the 'Aztec' point of view for older readers and teachers, with links to other useful sites.

school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/conquestamericas/

An informative site with lesson plans for teachers.

photius.com/wfb/wfb1999/mexico/mexico_geography.html

Mexican geography.

mexconnect.com

Large, all-embracing Mexico site with historical timeline and culture

members.aol.com/TeacherNet/Aztecs.html

Aztec site with links to other sites.

mexicocity.com.mx/history1.html

National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico.

quetzal-uk.com/

Mexican crafts.

thedagger.com/archive/conquest/tlatelolco.html

Another summary of the conquest.

righteye.free.fr/ftpperso.free.fr/Aztec2.html

Small site about Aztec food and medicine.

PLACES TO VISIT

The Mexican Gallery at the British Museum

A compact exhibition, containing many of the most interesting artefacts from Mexico and the Aztec period. It is organised according to themes about the beliefs of Mesoamerican peoples, each illustrated by a key object.

See the Mexicolore website (mexicolore.co.uk) for other recommended places to visit.



Aztecs

This resource pack is designed to help teach history-led, cross-curricular themes about the Aztecs and the Spanish Conquest of Mexico. The two programmes support Key Stage 2 'World history: study of a past society' and look at Aztec society at its peak and what happened when the Spanish arrived in 1520.

Programmes

- 1 *In search of the Aztecs*
- 2 *The end of the Aztec empire*

Plus . . .

This BBC Active DVD Plus Pack contains a Teacher's Activity Book with 12 photocopiable worksheets, photocard activity sheets, a timeline and a vocabulary list, to help you get the maximum benefit from the DVD.

About the author

Pat Hoodless is a former primary school teacher who is a writer and consultant specialising in history.

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Teacher's Activity Book ISBN 978-1-4066-0628-7

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